

Message Text

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72

ACTION EA-14

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 CIAE-00 DODE-00 PM-07 H-03 INR-11 L-03

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FM AMEMBASSY WELLINGTON

TO SECSTATE WASHDC PRIORITY 8601

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CINCPAC

C O N F I D E N T I A L WELLINGTON 2764

CINCPAC FOR POLAD

EO 11652: GDS

TAGS: PINT, NZ

SUBJECT: SELECTION OF NEW PRIME MINISTER

REF: WELLINGTON 2745

1. SUMMARY-LABOUR PARTY CAUCUS NOW SCHEDULED MEET MORNING SEPTEMBER 6 TO CHOOSE NEW PRIME MINISTER. ACTING PM HUGH WATT AND MINISTER OF FINANCE W.E. ROWLING ARE LEADING CONTENDERS. MINISTER OF JUSTICE FINLAY AND MINISTER OF DEFENSE FAULKNER STILL ARE IN THE RUNNING BUT MINISTER OF TRADE AND INDUSTRY FREER HAS ANNOUNCED HE WILL NOT BE A CANDIDATE. END SUMMARY

2. THE LABOUR PARTY CAUCUS WILL MEET SEPTEMBER 6 TO SELECT A NEW PRIME MINISTER. WHILE OTHER CONTENDERS HAVE REMAINED QUIET, ACTING PRIME MINISTER HUGH WATT HAS ANNOUNCED HE WILL SEEK THE JOB AND HAS BEEN ACTING VERY MUCH LIKE A MAN WHO IS SURE HE WILL GET IT. PRESS REPORTS WATT IS EXPECTING THE CAUCUS TO VOTE ON ONLY THREE POSITIONS (PRIME MINISTER, DEPUTY PRIME MINISTER AND ONE CABINET SLOT). WATT INDICATED HE DID NOT
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BELIEVE VOTES WOULD BE TAKEN ON THE REMAINDER OF THE

CABINET. THIS IS LIKELY TO BE THE CASE IF WATT BECOMES PRIME MINISTER, BUT ELEVATION OF ANY OTHER MAN TO THE JOB WOULD PROBABLY RESULT IN A REVAMPING OF THE CABINET.

3. IT APPEARS ALMOST CERTAIN THAT BILL ROWLING, IF HE DOES NOT BECOME PRIME MINISTER, WILL SUCCEED WATT AS DEPUTY PRIME MINISTER. ROWLING IS KEEPING HIS COUNSEL AND HAS MADE NO PUBLIC STATEMENTS SINCE KIRK'S DEATH. THE ODDS ON HIM BECOMING PRIME MINISTER ARE ABOUT THE SAME AS THOSE ON WATT.

4. ARTHUR FAULKNER AND MARTIN FINLAY REMAIN IN CONTENTION BUT THEIR CHANCES OF TAKING THE TOP SPOT ARE MUCH LESS THAN EITHER WATT'S OR ROWLING'S. IN ADDITION TO THESE MEN, MINISTER OF OVERSEAS TRADE JOSEPH WALDING AND MINISTER OF HEALTH ROBERT TIZARD HAVE BEEN MENTIONED AS POSSIBLE CANDIDATES. THEIR CHANCES OF MAKING THE GRADE MUST BE CONSIDERED SLIM.
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